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SUBJECT: GERMANY: STILL NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MISSILE  
DEFENSE, BUT CAN SUPPORT BUCHAREST DELIVERABLE

REF: SECDEF MSG DTG 131909Z FEB 08

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JOHN KOENIG. REASONS: 1.4 (B) A  
ND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Senior German officials told visiting MDA Director Lt. Gen. Obering that at the upcoming Bucharest Summit, Germany can support tasking NATO authorities to develop options for how the Alliance might provide MD for NATO territory not covered by the planned U.S. European-based MD system. However, looking beyond Bucharest, they claim that "a lot of questions," especially on costs, remained to be answered before Germany can agree on a specific NATO MD solution. Obering pointed out that the price of a complementary NATO system could be much less than expected since Germany and other nations have already paid the upfront costs of developing theater missile defense assets for deployed forces. While appreciative of the efforts the U.S. has made to reassure the Russians on MD, every interlocutor stressed the political importance of doing everything possible to get the Russians on board. To that end, many questioned the wisdom of pushing forward with MAP for Ukraine and Georgia at Bucharest, arguing that this would overburden the NATO-Russia agenda with too many contentious issues. CDU/CSU parliamentarians warned that FM Steinmeier (SPD) is much less supportive of MD than he has so far portrayed himself. They welcomed Obering's insights into how MD supports arms control and international stability and suggested that these arguments be highlighted in an op-ed placed in German newspapers. END SUMMARY.

Set for Bucharest  
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12. (C) Missile Defense Agency (MDA) Director Lt. Gen. Obering visited Berlin March 6-7, accompanied by MDA Deputy for International Affairs Nancy Morgan and an interagency delegation. Obering met separately with senior officials at MFA, MOD and the Chancellery as well as parliamentarians from the two Grand Coalition government parties, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU). While generally acknowledging they were "not enthusiastic" about MD, senior officials confirmed that Germany would be able to support what the U.S. is aiming to achieve on MD at the April 2-4 NATO Summit in Bucharest, namely the four MD elements outlined by Secretary Gates at the NATO Defense Ministerial in Vilnius (reftel). That includes a tasking to develop options for how NATO might provide MD for Allied territory

not covered by the planned U.S. European-based MD system. Obering emphasized that the U.S. was not seeking a final decision at Bucharest on a specific NATO system or any resource commitments.

MOD: Still lots of questions  
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13. (C) While reassuring Obering that Germany would "not be a difficult partner" at Bucharest, MOD officials "a lot of questions" remained to be answered in the follow-up after the summit before Germany could agree on a specific NATO MD solution. They emphasized the importance of obtaining the technical information they have sought from MDA, noting it was necessary to complete their own independent studies of MD. The government had to be in a position to "draw its own conclusions" in order to reassure a skeptical public of the wisdom of going forward with MD. Germany also needed a better idea of potential costs of providing coverage to those allies not fully covered by the U.S. long-range system (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece). They specifically raised concerns about MD architecture, debris, electromagnetic pulse (EMP) and costs.

14. (C) Regarding MD architecture, Obering noted that the U.S. long-range MD system has been specifically designed to allow it to be easily integrated with a NATO system, which would likely consist of shorter-range, theater systems like THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Air Defense), Aegis and Patriot. Obering called debris a "non-issue" since the only time it would come into play would be in the case of a missile launch against Europe itself. Presumably Europeans would prefer dealing with the small chance of debris rather than letting a missile strike their territory. For a missile shot at the

U.S., there would be no debris problem since the missile would be intercepted and destroyed over the Atlantic. Obering said the EMP was not an issue with a mid-course intercept system since the altitude of intercept was so high.

On the costs, Obering pointed out that many Allies, including Germany, were already investing in theater MD systems to protect their deployed troops. With these basic costs already paid, the price of providing short-range coverage for the Allies not protected by the U.S. long-range system would only be the marginal costs of providing 2-3 THAAD systems and 2-3 Aegis ships.

MFA: Concern about effect on relations with Russia  
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15. (C) While acknowledging that the U.S. had already done a lot to reassure the Russians on MD, MFA State Secretary Silberberg said it was important to keep trying to bring them on board. He noted that the Russians were telling them that the U.S. was backing away from verbal offers that it made last fall. Silberberg said the discussion of MD in Germany was "still very difficult" because many feared it would poison relations with Russia and stimulate a new arms race. Noting Russia's suspension of CFE, Silberberg said Germany had deep concerns that the whole arms control regime was "eroding." As a result, FM Steinmeier was pursuing an initiative at NATO to raise the Alliance's profile on arms control. He expressed frustration that Germany was being "blocked" at NATO in trying to draw on agreed language in addressing the issue of nuclear disarmament. He said it would be easier to go along with MD citing relevant provisions of the NPT if there were greater movement among the nuclear powers on nuclear disarmament. Silberberg also raised concerns about the U.S. pushing for the membership action plan (MAP) for Ukraine and Georgia at Bucharest, arguing that in combination with MD, this would overburden the NATO-Russia agenda with "too many difficult points."

16. (C) Obering emphasized that the U.S. has proposed to Russia a number of transparency and confidence building measures, including an offer not bring the U.S. MD system in Poland and Czech Republic into operational status until a concrete threat materializes. Obering rejected the claim

that the U.S. had back-tracked on any verbal offers, noting that the U.S. had never proposed leaving the interceptor missiles in the U.S. The offer had been to build and test the MD sites in Poland and the Czech Republic, but then to remove the interceptor missiles from their silos and store them on-site. Obering said he did not think the Russians were truly concerned about the U.S. MD system posing a threat to their nuclear deterrent, but were instead opposing the deployment for geopolitical reasons because they still considered eastern Europe part of their "backyard." Obering also challenged that MD had any bearing on Russia's decision to suspend implementation of the CFE Treaty, noting that Russia had been threatening such a move long before the proposal to deploy MD assets to Poland and the Czech Republic had ever been made.

¶17. (C) Picking up on Silberberg's concerns about developments in the international arms control regime, Obering made the case that far from undermining arms control, MD was supportive of it in a number of ways. Noting that the number of countries with ballistic missile technology has increased from 8 to 30 in the past 35 years (since the 1972 ABM Treaty), Obering argued that MD could discourage the further proliferation and development of this technology. MD was also a stabilizing factor in crisis situations involving adversaries with ballistic missiles, as the 2006 North Korea episode had shown, because it gave decision-makers an additional option beyond a pre-emptive strike. While the simple threat of retaliation would deter rational actors, MD was needed to provide protection against those adversaries, especially non-state actors, who might relish a suicide scenario and could not be deterred.

¶18. (C) Following up on Silberberg's comment on nuclear disarmament provisions of the NPT, Charge Koenig said the U.S. rejected any linkage with current discussions of MD. He further pointed out that nuclear disarmament is an issue fundamentally addressed and is not appropriate to raise as a central theme at the NATO Bucharest Summit.

Chancellery: More positive attitude  
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¶19. (C) In contrast to the SPD-led MFA, the Chancellery raised fewer concerns and objections about the way forward on MD. Deputy National Security Advisor Rolf Nikel asked questions about debris, EMP and the ability of the U.S. MD system to handle decoys, but readily accepted Obering's assurances that debris and EMP were non-issues and that the MD system had demonstrated its ability in recent tests to distinguish between decoys and real targets. On the Iranian threat, Nikel complained that the recent U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) had not been "helpful" because it only reported the alleged suspension of weaponization activities and failed to highlight Iran's uranium enrichment and development of missile technology. Like Silberberg, Nikel also highlighted the need to continue to engage the Russians on MD, noting the agenda with Moscow is already full of other contentious issues, like Kosovo, CFE and MAP for Ukraine and Georgia.

Parliamentarians: SPD vs. CDU/CSU  
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¶10. (C) Obering met with four SPD members of the Bundestag Defense Committee, including Rainer Arnold, the SPD defense policy spokesman, who in the past has opposed MD. Arnold and his colleagues were surprisingly open-minded about U.S. MD plans, but they did emphasize the need to bring Russia along and wondered why the proposed Bucharest MD decisions about a NATO system could not be delayed to a later date. As in all his meetings, Obering reviewed the threat in detail, including Iran's ongoing efforts to expand the range of its missiles. He noted that it did not make sense for Iran to develop these longer-range ballistic missiles unless it planned to arm them with nuclear warheads, especially since the missiles were so inaccurate. He thought Iran was aiming to create a "nuclear umbrella" for itself that would allow it

unfettered freedom of action in international affairs. Obering predicted that Iran would fly a missile capable of reaching most European capitals within a year or two, which made moving forward with MD plans urgent. He noted that even assuming conclusion and ratification of bilateral agreements with Poland and Czech Republic this year, it would be 2011/2012 before the MD sites could be fully built and 2013 before the system would be operational.

¶11. (C) Obering also met with three CDU/CSU parliamentarians, including Eckart von Klaeden and Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, who noted they had both published articles in favor of MD as a prudent "plan B," in case "plan A" (negotiations with Iran) fail. Like other interlocutors, they noted that the NIE had been unhelpful in advancing the case for MD in Germany. They cautioned against underestimating the significance of public opinion in Germany on this issue and in that connection, said it was of the "utmost importance" to keep Russia "in the boat." They also warned that FM Steinmeier is much more negative about MD in the internal German debate than he portrays himself as being to Washington. The parliamentarians welcomed Obering's arguments about how MD supports arms control efforts and international stability and suggested that these be highlighted in an op-ed in German newspapers. They argued it was important to put MD into an arms control context to counter claims from the SPD and others that MD will lead to a new arms race. They also cautioned that pushing forward with MAP for Ukraine and Georgia at Bucharest could reduce the appetite of MD.

¶12. (C) Von Klaeden and zu Guttenberg also wondered how the upcoming presidential election in the U.S. could change MD plans, noting that it was their feeling that few people in Congress strongly supported MD. Obering responded that, in fact, MD enjoyed fairly strong bipartisan support in Congress and in the U.S. as a whole. He noted that the Democratically controlled Congress had approved \$8.7 billion of MDA's \$8.9 billion budget request for FY2008 and that public opinion polls show that 80% of the American public supports MD. Obering also noted that it is U.S. law (the 1999 National Missile Defense Act) that a MD system be deployed as soon as technologically feasible to defend U.S. territory against limited ballistic attack.

Comment

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¶13. (C) The one theme emphasized by every German interlocutor during this visit was the need to bring Russia along on MD. Putin's February 2007 speech at the Munich Security Conference, in which he railed against U.S. plans to deploy a European-based MD system, continues to reverberate here. As we go forward, it will be important to reiterate at every opportunity that the U.S. MD system to be based in Poland and the Czech Republic is not oriented against Russia. We must also demonstrate that we are doing everything reasonably possible to address Russian concerns. For the German public, it will be useful to emphasize that, notwithstanding Russian complaints, MD in general supports arms control efforts and international stability. Toward that end, post plans to make the case for MD on arms control grounds in an op-ed for publication in selected German newspapers before Bucharest.

TIMKEN JR